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GERMAN DECEPTION IN THE ARDENNES LESSONS FOR THE SENIOR LEADER

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL DENNIS C. DEMING

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An Individual Study Project
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GERMAN DECEPTION IN THE ARDENNES:
Lessons for the Senior Leader

by

LTC Dennis C. Deming

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Project Adviser



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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: German Deception in the Ardennes: Lessons for the Senior Leader

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Since the declassification of World War II intelligence sources, such as Ultra, the concept of deception has come under careful study. The purpose of this paper is to review the Allied reaction to the German deception efforts prior to the Ardennes counteroffensive to determine if there are lessons for the senior leader. Dr. Michael Handel's deception Ways and Means and the Attitude and Environment are reviewed against the situation to determine what, if anything, the future would be senior leader should consider about deception as part of his professional development.

GERMAN DECEPTION IN THE ARDENNES:

Lessons for the Senior Leader

The Lord provided Joshua with a strategem for the defeat of the city of Ai. Thirty thousand men were to lay in ambush while Joshua demonstrated in front of the city with the remainder of his force. The plan was for Joshua to flee from in front of the Ai's, drawing them into an ambush. The deception worked and Ai was captured by Joshua. (Joshua, chapter 8)

One of the earliest records of a successful deception demonstrates its power to overcome barriers to successful combat operations. Josuha could have laid siege to Ai or the Lord could have allowed Joshua to destroy the walls as he had at Jerico, but instead the Lord provided Joshua with a strategem. (Strategem is a plan designed to deceive an enemy.)

The purpose of this paper is not to interpret the

Bible. The purpose is to relate the German deception efforts at the Battle of the Bulge to current thoughts on deception principles in order to better understand what the senior leader can and cannot expect from deception at the operational level of war.

The United States Army and the Joint Chiefs of Staff have begun to incorporate deception into its doctrine at strategical and operational levels of war. FM 100-5, operations, (1986 version) addresses deception in terms of a major functional area which must be considered at both the operational and tactical level.¹ Thus suggesting that our commanders should study and consider ways and means of employing deception at these levels. The Army's draft FM 100-6 Large Unit Operations expands upon FM 100-5 providing the commander greater background on deception and including deception as a sub-paragraph in the campaign plan's concept of operation.² Currently at the Unified level manuals are being developed and coordinated which will provide the CINC and staff of Unified and Specified Commands with broad guidance on many facets of war planning and war fighting at the strategic level which when incorporated will doctrinally provide for the incorporation of deception at the strategic level.³

Deception was masterfully employed by the Allies in World War II, at every level. Normandy being their greatest triumph. By the end of WWII the Allies had raised deception to an art form. John Masterman writes about the Allies

ability to deceive the Germans,"...you can select his information, you can pervert his information, you can misinform him, and eventually, actively deceive him as to your intentions."⁴

As the commander, particularly the senior commander begins to comprehend the benefits of deception to his warfighting intentions he must maintain a balance. Lockheed's recent advertisement on electronic technology probably best expresses the need for balance when they write, "Deception. A sin in everyday life, in time of war a virtue."⁵ Deception in time of peace should not be treated lightly because the senior leader must bear in mind that deception at the highest levels means to some extent to deceive our form of government and its checks and balances. Sir John Masterman stated, "In communicating with the enemy almost from day to day in time of war...Our experience was that this responsibility ought to be taken on as high a level as possible."⁶ Certainly, in a time of peace this admonition should not go unheeded. The senior leader must ensure that he keeps a proper perspective in such high level manners because of their potential embarrassment to the American people. The senior leader must also not become too complacent or over confident. The Soviets use maskirovka at every level.⁷ They out gun us in terms of numbers. We cannot afford to let them surprise or deceive us at any level from tactical to strategical. This is as true on the Elbe as in the Caribbean. Therefore, we must fully

understand the principles and pitfalls of deception.

If Normandy was our greatest success, then the Battle of the Bulge was our greatest failure in World War II. The United States bore the brunt of the German counteroffensive and suffered 81,000 casualties while employing 600,000 men against half a million Germans.⁸ The implications for today are obvious when one considers the ratio of forces in NATO versus the Warsaw Pact. As the review of the preparations for this battle unfolds, the reader will see that it is still debated as to whether or not the Allies were deceived. The overwhelming evidence is that they were deceived. All the rationalizing cannot refute the fact that the soldier on the forward edge of the battlefield was asked to fight outnumbered and win. The German deception employed both active and passive means. The majority of the German effort was concentrated on secrecy. However, two key active deception measures were undertaken at Hitler's direction. First was the establishment of the code name "Watch on the Rhine" which provided the Germans with a cover story that suggested they were preparing to defend along the Rhine. Second was the decision to not inform Von Rundstedt of the planned counter offensive until the last possible moment. The Allies assumed that Von Rundstedt was in command of the West, they failed to understand Hitler's role in this action. The focus must be on why were the Allies fooled and could they have avoided the deception.

A logical means of reviewing the Battle of the Bulge is

to use Dr. Michael Handel's notion of characteristics of successful deception in World War II. He breaks the characteristics into two broad categories of (1) Means and Methods and (2) Attitudes and the Environment.⁹ These categories are further broken down as follows: (1) Means and Methods a. Organization, b. Ultra, c. The Double-Cross System, d. Time, e. Allied air superiority, and f. the overall performance of German Intelligence and (2) Attitudes and the Environment a. Weakness and Vulnerability, b. the Ideological Environment and c. Attitudes of leaders.

By the Winter of 1944 each of these characteristics had been developed by the Allies and the Germans. The Allies had successfully entered the Continent of Europe and were facing tough German resistance. The debate of Allied strategy had evolved into Eisenhower's broad front. The American First Army had been in heavy fighting around Aachen. Both sides had to utilize economy of force measures due to the broad front policy. Because of the terrain, the Ardennes and adjacent to it the Eifel, were selected as if in coordination between the Allies and the Germans as the area along the front which represented the quiet zone. Here soldiers came to rest or learn the ropes before going into battle. Thus, the calculated risk on the part of Eisenhower to reduce forces along the 100 or so mile stretch in Bradley's 12th Army Group zone. With that cursory background let us review the Allies means and methods prior to the German counteroffensive.

ORGANIZATION

Dr. Handel suggests that deception during WWII became formally organized and characterized by "...unprecedented deception efforts which involved complex coordination of activities among different commands and regions, as well as among different intelligence and military organizations;..."¹⁰. As with any large scale organization the intelligence was probably filtered to some degree in both directions. In all of the reviewed literature there is no greater sore point than whether or not the Allies were deceived. In his history of the First Army, Mr. Colby states, "In the first place, and in general, we were not surprised."¹¹ However, the First Army and The Eight Corps Commanders did not quite see it that way. Major General Middleton, the Eight Corps commander stated in his biography, "...some 200,000 Germans, moved into position ever so artfully. They had travelled by night. They never got out from under the plentiful cover of the Eifel hills during the day. They maintained perfect quiet all but perfect deception."¹² The History of the Eighth Corps indicates, "on the morning of 16 December the VIII corps front flared up...no inkling of such offensive strength filtered through our G-2 channels."¹³ The First Army report of operations indicates that piecemeal evidence was available however nothing significant.¹⁴ The 21st Army

Group under the command of General Bradley was fooled. General Bradley was off to a meeting with General Eisenhower to discuss replacements and future operations.¹⁵ Possibly, Bedell Smith's summation is most accurate about the situation in the Ardennes, from a military intelligence point of view, "In itself, the Ardennes area contained no military objectives. The enemy's only long-range purpose in assaulting here could be to reach across the Meuse River, and the Meuse was fifty miles away. Any such objective would require a counter offensive in great strength."¹⁶ To General Smith goes on to address General Bradley's estimate of the Ardennes area prior to the counter offensive, "Considering the tortuous terrain, he (Bradley) had believed for some time that in the event of a local enemy counterattack the American troops in the line, supported by several forward reserve divisions immediately available, could take care of any risk the Germans might be willing to assume...At the very least, Bradley estimated, that the Germans could be stopped on the Meuse,..."¹⁷ The official United States Army History of the Battle of the Bulge reviewed the Allied situation maps of early December 1944 and the German movements during the period. The V Corps had only identified 3 of 12 German divisions assembled in its front, the VIII Corps 4 out of 10.¹⁸ John Eisenhower's book The Bitter Woods sums it up, "The fact is the Allies were surprised."¹⁹

Surprisingly, even with all the evidence, one

individual, Col B.A.Dickson, First Army G-2, continued to suggest that his Intelligence Estimate Number 37 provided ample warning to the Allied command of an offensive in the Ardennes.²⁰ Forty-five years later it is difficult to read Estimate Number 37 (Appendix A) and come away with a clear vision that a German offensive in the Ardennes is imminent. The estimate states, "During the past month there has been a definite pattern for the seasoning of newly formed divisions in the comparatively quiet sector opposite VIII Corps prior to their dispatch to more active fronts."²¹ Later he addresses the enemy's capabilities as being defend, counterattack, retiring East of the Rhine, or collapse.²² McDonald's story of this battle, A Time For Trumpets, treats Dickson as the culprit for the Allied intelligence failure. Two examples of particular import are Dickson's refusal to allow the OSS to work in the First Army area²³ and Dickson's refusal to allow the Ultra Special Liaison Unit (SLU) to brief the First Army Commander, at the scheduled staff meetings, insisting on doing it himself.²⁴

LTC Rosengarten, the First Army Ultra SLU, in his after action report following World War II addressed many important areas associated with the utilization of Ultra material in First Army during the war. He was very critical of his position within First Army and his relationship with Ultra and the First Army G-2, Col Dickson, "Many of my difficulties were caused by the personality of the G-2 at First U.S.Army and to his relatively unimportant voice in

the Army's Cabinet."²⁵ In his conclusions he also states, "Throughout the job I have felt great discomfort over the fact that I was serving two masters: one was the C.G. of First U.S.Army through his G-2 by reason of my detached service there, and the other was my parent organization."²⁶ As well as being critical of security for Ultra in the First Army Headquarters Rosengarten also had other problems,"...other readers, for lack of something better to do, would frequently grab a seemingly important signal and rush it to the G-2 without giving it thought and study it required. Ultra is something which must be "read, marked, learned and inwardly digested". If a signal is not understandable, it must not be dismissed as unimportant. Ultra must be presented not for what it says but for what it means to the command which receives it."²⁷ Possibly because of guidance from his "parent" organization on the length of his report Rosengarten was unable to expand upon his comments. He had crossed the English Channel with First Army and remained with them throughout the war. He wrote a very concise report which offered many suggestions on future organizations. He also seemed a bit ill at ease,...I got no help from "home" and my duties as your representative were "in addition" to those given me by the G-2...I hope I did not let you down."²⁸ Rosengarten indicated that no Ultra information which had not been confirmed by other sources was passed on to the Corps.²⁹ This last point, which although most likely necessary to insure that the Ultra

system was well protected because of its importance, means that Rosengarten's admonition about the proper use of Ultra was probably even more critical than he realized. Corps Commanders were being denied access to information which may be critical to their battle plans.

The organizational aspect has been heavily researched here and elsewhere without much concrete success in determining the ability of the intelligence community to avoid being deceived by the Germans. The Command and General Staff College used the Battle of the Ardennes as a historical example for its students in the early 1950s. The conclusion concerning intelligence then was, "Current doctrine provides for, and stresses the value of intelligence activities and the proper evaluation of enemy capability."³⁰ Thus suggesting that the organizational structure and procedures were appropriate but that those occupying the positions had failed to properly employ the doctrine. A fairly strong indictment. However Dr. Handel suggests, "While deception often fails to attain its objectives, it rarely fails because the adversary has identified it as deception."³¹ In other words it may be suggested that deception is unavoidable. The senior leader must be on guard against possible deception, however, one is trained to be aggressive and demonstrate initiative not to be timid in every decision. Therefore, it is very likely that given the circumstances just prior to the German offensive; continuous Allied successes, air superiority,

etc., the senior leader may have been hard pressed to conceive of a German Army capable of inflicting any significant action against the Allies. Mr. Cole, in the United States Army History of the Battle of the Bulge, best sums up the situation of the intelligence failure, "In the years that have passed since the close of World War II the Ardennes has ranked close to Pearl Harbor as an episode inviting public polemic, personal vituperation, and ex parte vindication. Sentences, phrases, and punctuation marks from American intelligence documents of pre-Ardennes origin have been twisted and turned, quoted in and out of context, "interpreted" and misinterpreted, in arduous efforts to fix blame and secure absolution. There no longer is point to such intensely personal examination of the failure by American and Allied intelligence to give warning of the Ardennes counter offensive preparations. The failure was general and cannot be attributed to any person or group of persons."³²

However, several key points for the senior leader are worthy of repeating. First, the senior leader must understand and accept risks in war. General Bradley, faced with a broad front strategy, accepted the risk, however he also had the vision to establish contingencies should the risk become reality. Second, special operation forces are highly skilled and trained assets which must be employed on the battlefield to the greatest advantage of the commander. Possibly the presence of large forces could have been

identified if these special operation forces were properly employed in the German occupied area. Therefore it is important that the staff understands how to employ these forces. Third, the commander must not only direct but he must also supervise and train his staff as well as his commanders. General Hodges, the First Army Commander, provided his G-2 with a rather long leash. The senior leader must be watchful of his staff as well as his commanders to insure that they properly utilize all the resources available to the commander. Probably the most cherished intelligence resource and Dr. Handel's second characteristic of means and methods in WWII was Ultra. That the First Army Commander would exclude its liaison members should have been a concern to not only General Bradley but also to Ultra.

ULTRA AND THE DOUBLE CROSS SYSTEM

The First Army Ultra liaison officer, LTC Rosengarten, Jr. wrote after the war, in his after action report, "That the Ardennes Offensive... could have been foreseen is submitted for the following reasons:

(a)...(b)...(c)...etc...While the enemy had no cover plan to mislead us, his counter-intelligence was superb and merits very careful study. Some clues came from open sources but were not heeded as no clue came from Ultra."³³ The liaison officer's last two sentences are rather telling.

The German's did have an extensive cover plan. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht number 28/44 dated November 5, 1944 (Appendix B) lays out Hitler's basic deception plan with considerable detail to insure that the deception was properly executed.³⁴ After the war, the U.S.Army Historical Division conducted several studies. One was The Preparation for the German Offensive in the Ardennes September to 16 December 1944. The document is based upon interviews with Jodl and members of the general staff. The Germans had in fact made significant cover plans including not informing the Commander in Chief, West General Von Runstedt.³⁵ As to the degree to which Ultra provided pertinent information, the record is not clear.

Dr. Handel suggests that, "Ultra was the single most important means of facilitating deception available to the Allies...The Allies were constantly a step ahead of the Germans not only because they were almost fully aware of German plans and strategy but also because they played a direct role in shaping them."³⁶ By shaping them Dr. Handel refers to the Double Cross System so effectively employed by the Allies during WWII. These two intelligence activities Ultra and the Double Cross System are Dr. Handel's second and third means and methods. Throughout the review of literature about this campaign as it relates to Ultra and the Double Cross System two important points ring out. The first is an attitudinal one and will be addressed later. Second, however is the terrible sense of failure and

soul searching that is portrayed by those directly involved. Unfortunately when the senior leaders of the war, Eisenhower, Bradley, etc., write of their experiences they were not (because of security reasons) able to discuss Ultra's affect on their decision making. Now, that Ultra has been publicized, those great leaders are no longer with us. From the intelligence community side, Masterman writes, "Airborne forces were a constantly recurring subject and one question in December (1944)-"American Airborne Divisions 82 and 101, probably in the district Chalons-Sur-Marne, to what extent are they ready for combat?"-seems to point to Rundstedts' Ardennes offensive which occurred very shortly afterwards."³⁷ It is difficult to determine before the fact that a question concerning the enemy's strategic reserve from the defending CINC could be interpreted as cause for a deduction that a large scale offensive operation was in the future. Mr. Ralph Bennett writes in the preface to his book Ultra In the West, "There is nothing... to record what Hut 3 thought at the time about the evidence for an offensive in the Ardennes... or even that it had a collective opinion at all. Awareness of this immunity from past error has made me very cautious before expressing my conviction that the field commander more than once seriously mistook the true meaning of Ultra intelligence..."³⁸ He corroborates the fact that the customer of Ultra, the Commanders, had not left an account of Ultra's influence on their decision making.³⁹ Mr. Bennett believes that while

the evidence was available nothing conclusively pointed to the Ardennes.⁴⁰

The sources available do not provide any answers as to Ultra's role in the Battle of the Bulge. However, from the accounts two conclusions can be drawn. One, if Ultra disclosed the forth coming offensive it never was filtered down to the commander in the field. Two, the reliance on Ultra appears to have been significant, but until further study is conducted we can only speculate as to Ultra's role in this instance. Our current laws continue to preclude us from publishing this type of information, however, nothing precludes us from insuring that it is captured in our after action reports. Without the accounts of the senior leaders, in this case, it is difficult to ascertain if the Allies were a step ahead of the Germans because of Ultra and the Double Cross System. Possibly these types of intelligence means are more adaptable to friendly as opposed to enemy offensive operations because of ones ability to influence the opponents decision making through deception in preparation for offensive operations.

TIME

The fourth means and method of Dr. Handel is time. Time in terms of deception was not a significant point for either side. Time is critical to the development of agents for double cross systems and to a degree for the development

of the cover story at the operational level. Time, caused by a lack of logistical support and a pre-occupation with the Roer River dams made the counteroffensive possible. That is not to say that the Germans were unaware of the value of time to deception operations. Another post-war study by the Historical Division indicates that the German's considered time to be critical to the success of any deception plan.⁴¹

ALLIED AIR SUPERIORITY

The fifth means and method is Allied air superiority. In the book The Bitter Woods the author describes air reconnaissance as "...a most important source of information..."⁴² Unfortunately, poor weather conditions, a lack of priority, preconceived notions of German intentions, and the German's execution of their deception plan caused the Allies to not take full advantage of this capability. The determination of priority will be around as long as there are limited resources. The senior leader's responsibility is to insure that the priority and risks are kept in balance and are based upon his vision of the battlefield. The joint training program should go a long way towards insuring that these air reconnaissance assets are fully understood and properly applied to the battlefield. With the modernization of our deep attack capabilities, the commander has the capability to see deep

and influence the action far forward of the battle area. As he does this he must be mindful of the enemies intentions and capabilities, guarding against possible deceptions.

GERMAN INTELLIGENCE

The final means and method is German intelligence. Dr. Handel and others are very critical of the German intelligence contribution at the strategic level with good reason. As Dr. Handel points out, "A more critical examination of the information and less wishful thinking might have changed the course of the war."⁴³ Prior to the Battle of the Bulge, the Allied intelligence community suffered from the same problems. Dr. Handel's point is that the intelligence officers were not well thought of within the German Army. To some extent the same could be said about the American Army.⁴⁴ Today, the problem is not one of highly trained and qualified intelligence officers. The problem is associated with the need for the senior leader to understand the quantity and the inherent quality of intelligence gathering in the joint arena. Today's battlefield is vast and capable of rapid change due to lethality and mobility. The senior leader must know where and how to take advantage of all intelligence resources in a timely manner. He must understand information nodes. He must insure that coordination of intelligence occurs. But most importantly he must look at what Dr. Handel terms "Attitudes and the Environment".⁴⁵

ATTITUDES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Dr. Handel develops attitudes and the environment by looking at the following notions: weakness and vulnerability, the ideological environment, and attitudes of leaders.⁴⁶ It is interesting that as the Allies gain the upper hand, become stronger and less vulnerable their deception efforts become less imaginative.⁴⁷ Additionally, as the Allies ideological environment begins to shift with each success against the Germans one can only speculate as to their desire to continue with deception operations. Possibly, not all of the leadership was interested in or felt a need for further deception operations. One author, writes, "Predictably, Americans considered deception as unnecessary subtlety in view of their superior mobility, firepower and material resources."⁴⁸ The Germans however had a change in attitudes and the environment. Hitler was the force behind the counteroffensive. Jodl stated, "Choosing Antwerp as the objective was risky, he explained, and considered from a purely technical point of view it would seem in disproportion with the available forces. Nevertheless, the German Supreme Command was determined to stake everything on one card."⁴⁹ Hitler knew he needed a victory that would buy him time and possibly end the fighting in the West. His goal was the capture of Antwerp and destruction of all

forces in the breakthrough area. The German attack began on December 16, 1944. The Americans had been surprised, but the Germans failed to reach their first objective.⁵⁰

CONCLUSIONS

The entire counteroffensive would, within a few days be ground to a halt, and the Allies would go once again onto the offensive. It has been suggested that the German operation was doomed to failure from the beginning.⁵¹ Bradley's calculated risk was now reality. Weigley would later take great exception to this notion of calculated risk.⁵² He suggests that Bradley judged the risks in the Ardennes badly.⁵³

The German deception had been successful. They had assembled 24 divisions along a 100 mile front without any Allied senior leader committing resources to counter the deception. The plan had been conceptualized by Hitler in September. The 5th and 6th Panzer Armies had been repositioned in the Eifel for the attack through the Ardennes to Antwerp.

"Allied intelligence officers had committed the most greivous sin of which a G-2 is capable. They "had looked in a mirror for the enemy and seen there only the reflection of their own intentions."⁵⁴ Another historian states, "Allied intelligence services, heady from an unbroken string of victories would not foresee the great approaching blow in

spite of accumulating evidence."⁵⁵ The Ardennes, without a doubt had received little attention from the Allies. The main thrusts were to the North and South. The Allies had become almost mesmerized by the Roer River dams. The preoccupation with this key terrain provided the Germans with a story line for their deception.⁵⁶ All movement in the Cologne area by German forces was considered to be in preparation for an Allied attack on the Roer River dams. The Allies considered these dams to be key in their drive to the Rhine. They were concerned that the Germans would blow the dams flooding the plains and entrapping large amounts of soldiers and equipment.⁵⁷ The Ardennes, meanwhile, had become an R&R center of sorts, during the period 19 November to 11 December 1944, the VIII Corps had received all new divisions to defend in sector. The 28th and the 4th Infantry having just been relieved from fierce fighting in the Hurtgen Forest.⁵⁸ These soldiers would not have time to become sufficiently attuned to the terrain or their surroundings.

One author has suggested that..."in the final analysis deception is the act of one commander influencing another."⁵⁹ In this case, the Allies had been watching the wrong commander, Rundstedt.⁶⁰ As was pointed out earlier, Hitler had kept Rundstedt uninformed of the counteroffensive until the last possible date.⁶¹ Thus while Hitler prepared his forces for the counteroffensive, the Allies were being influenced by Rundstedt, a soldier of

great stature, even to the Allies, a soldier who was unaware of the counteroffensive. Bennett writes, "...so the Allies now argued that a soldier of the old school like Von Rundstedt would not be so rash as to begin an attack which he lacked the resources to sustain."⁶² The Allies were set up from the beginning. They had become very confident. The soldiers in the Ardennes were there for rest. The Allies thought Rundstedt was calling the shots. Finally, with some credibility, Bennett suggests that the reliance on Ultra had become so great that absence of evidence from Ultra meant no attack was imminent.⁶³ While he does not guarantee their effectiveness, Dr. Handel's number one measure for deception avoidance is to not over rely on one source of information.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, the history of the Ardennes is incomplete without the involved senior leaders' impressions and usage of Ultra. However, from the available evidence one can logically assume that the Germans did totally surprise the Allied senior leadership. A combination of factors had caused both the intelligence forces and commanders to be deceived. To have avoided such a deception would have required greater resources, greater use of available resources and possibly some luck. The Allies had no luck and their resources were running thin. The broad front strategy was taking a toll on manpower.⁶⁵

The intelligence gathering was wanting. When disaster struck the Allies had at least three important things going

for them. First, the tenacity of the front line soldier. Second, Eisenhower's swift assessment of the situation. Third, the Germans inability to press the advantage gained from their deception and surprise.

Sun Tzu said, "...there are three ways in which a ruler can bring misfortune upon his army: When ignorant that the army should not advance, to order advance..."⁶⁶ Hitler had ordered the advance. In the military history after action report one of the general staff officers stated, "It was calculated that, under the most favorable conditions, Antwerp the objective of the offensive, could be reached within seven days."⁶⁷ Probably one of the most important lessons to the Battle of the Bulge unfolded as the battle raged. Dr. Handel terms this "the pitfall of self-deception".⁶⁸ Hitler, even though his generals had recommended a lesser objective, felt that with the available forces he could defeat the Allies from Antwerp to Trier. Yet, surprise was not enough. The Germans were unable to take advantage of the situation. Within six months Hitler was dead and the war in Europe was over.

Almost 45 years later the United States Army is once again developing doctrine and force structure for deception operations.⁶⁹ The lessons to be learned by the study of current literature, such as Dr. Handel's and previous battles, such as the Bulge, will help prepare the senior leader for future wars, should they come. Deception must be learned before the battle. The senior leader must know its pitfalls and principles.

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U.S. Army Military History Institute
First United States Army
APO 230

30 December, 1944
G-2 - 12,020

G-2 Estimates No 37

Summary of the Situation:

a. General. Since the publication of G-2 estimate No.36, dated 20 Nov 44 the enemy has stubbornly contested every foot of ground in the zone of action of the First U.S. Army. He has defended with one Armd, one Para, one PZ Gr and eighteen Inf Divs. 11g Pz Div is now out of the line for repair, 3 Pz Gr is about due, ten Inf Divs have been consolidated into four for a net loss of six, one Inf Div was dissolved and a further Div, 3 Para, is badly mauled. (See Order of Battle Notes, Annex No 1, G-2 Periodic Report no., 178, 5 Dec 44). Back of the line of the ROER he has intensified his defense zone by fortification in depth, converting each village into a strongpoint, and has notably strengthened the field fortifications on the line of the ERFT. His armored reserve appears to be quartered in houses and barns along the railroads generally in a semi-circle from DUSSELDORF to KOBLENZ, with Koeln as a center point. He has brought up and continues to bring up Army and Corps artillery formations and to build up his fighter-bomber strength on the Western Front. It is plain that his strategy in defense of the Reich is based on the exhaustion of our offensive to be followed by an all-out counterattack with armor, between the ROER and the ERFT, supported by every weapon he can bring to bear. The suspension of V-1 fire from the BAUMHOLDER area and the BONN sites is believed to be based on the use of his railroads for the bringing in of new Volksgrenadier divisions west of the Rhine and for the build up of the necessary artillery and supplies to support his all out ground counterattack. It is very probable that his current production of V-1's is being routed to new sites in the BLACK FOREST and elsewhere east of the RHINE, where they can be brought to bear in support of his all-out counterattack by interdicting and bombarding our supply installations and artillery areas. PW's mentioned seeing artillery units with new guns preparing to fire the compressed air shell, and the use of this or other secret weapons is to be expected. In the face of the Third US Army's penetration toward the SAAR Basin, Von Rundstedt reluctantly dispatched PZ Lehr from his carefully hoarded reserve. Its commitment revealed, however, that two months spent in WESTPHALIA reforming and refitting had failed to bring it up to the strength and standing of the 1943 first-class PZ Div. Persistent rumors from PWs and from other sources give grounds for suspicions that 5 SS Pz

DivWiking has replaced PZ Lehr in Von Rundstedt's armored reserve. Tac/R and ground sources further indicate a buildup in the BITBURG_WITTLICH area, where PZ Div Grossdeutschland has been reported by PWs and Pz Lehr or elements thereof by a usually reliable source. A captured order for a comb-out of selected personnel speaking the American dialect to report th Hq Skorzeny at FRIEDENTHAL, nearORANIENBURG, by 1 November, obviously pressges special operations for sabotage, attacks on CP's and other vital installations by infiltrated or parachuted specialists. An extremely intelligent pw whose other observations check exactly with established facts stated that every means possible is being gathered for the coming all-out counter offensive. It is notable that morale among PWs freshly captured, both in the Army cage and at Communications Zone cage, recently achieved a new high. This has been expressed by attempts to escape and avowed eagerness on the part of the prisoners to return and rejoin the battle for Germany. It is apparent that Von Rundstedt, who obviously is conduction military operations without the benefit of intuition, has skilfully defended and husbanded his forces and is preparing for his part in the all-out application of every weapon at the focal point and the correct time to achieve defense of the Reich west of the RHINE by inflicting as great a defeat on the Allies as possible. Indications to date point to the location of this focal point as being between ROERMOND and SCHLEIDEN, and within this bracket this concentrated force will be applied to the Allied force judged by the German High Command to be the greatest threat to successful defense of the Reich.

(1) Seventh German Army. The right (north) wing of the Seventh German Army has been strengthened by the sidestepping to the right and north of German divisions on the front, by the bringing of 353 VG Div from the EIFEL to the GEY sector, by the bringing of 3 Para from first Para Army to the DUELEN sector, and by the buildup of armored reserves in the EUSKIRCHEN-QUELPICH area. The left wing and the general front of the Seventh German Army appears to have been srengthened by the arrival of Volksgrenadier divisions out of Germany. 352 VG Div is indicated by a deserter as being in the VIII U.S. Corps sector, and unexplained troop movements to WITTLICH and to ZUELPIGH-GEMUND suggest others.

(2) Fifth Panzer Army. Fifth Panzer Army has shared the strengthening by the arc of SS Pz Divs of the Sixth Panzer Army. Although 10SS is apparently withdrawn from the line after having bolstered 9 Pz and 15 Pz Gr in the GEPLENKIRCHEN sector, its presence immediately northeast of GEEPLENKIRCHEN is continually alleged by PW's,

(3) Sixth Panzer Army. Sixth Panzer Army as listed in Annex 1 to G-2 Estimate no. 36 is known to have

lost Pz Lehr, but is suspected to have obtained 5 SS Pz Div Wiking in its stead.

(4) First Parachute Army. First Parachute Army has yielded one Para Div to the needs of the AACHEN sector, but has probably gained replacements for m the Fifteenth German Army and still is probably possessed of 2, 5, 6, 8 and 8 Para Divs, although a ground report indicated 5 Para Div was enroute to the AACHEN Sector. Pure logic would expect 5 Para to be committed in the BERGSTEIN-SCHMIDT area in the defense of the dams, with other good quality infantry possibly being used by Von Rundstedt for this purpose.

(5) Fifteenth German Army. Due to the flood conditions on the NEDER RIJN and demolition of dikes, this army has released for use on other fronts the following divisions: 85, 245, 256, 331, and 363 Inf Divs. Four of these have been recommitted, leaving 85 and 331 still available. One or both of these may be committed in other sectors, with possibly one in First U.S. Army area. 59 and 346 Divs have also disappeared from the line in Holland and their present whereabouts are unknown. Christian's Holland Corps appears to have taken over the sector formerly occupied by Fifteenth Army on the right (west flank) of First Para Army, and the whereabouts of General Von Zangen's headquarters at the present time remains uncertain. Evidence from PWs points to the new location of Fifteenth Army at KOENIGSHOVEN, perhaps with Von Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army acting as Panzergruppe, subordinate to it in much the same fashion as Panzergruppe Eberbach functioned under Seventh Army in Normandy.

b. Strategy. the restoration of the West Wall is still a probable strategic objective. The Dilemma which has confronted the enemy in the defeat of the Nineteenth Army and its retreat across the upper RHINE has been accepted without a drain on the armored reserve of the Sixth Panzer Army. The retreat to the SAAR has been met by the dispatch of the Pz Lehr, three Fifteenth Army divisions, and will probably call for the commitment of one Inf Div and another Pz Div., 2 Pz is a logical choice. The enemy has let his situation in both the upper RHINE and south of the MOSELLE deteriorate while still conserving reserves between DUSSELDORF AND KOELN. Von Rundstedt apparently is accepting defeats in the south rather than compromise his hope of a decisive success in the north. This would appear to be the keynote of his strategy in the defense of the Reich west of the RHINE. During the past month there has been a definite pattern for the seasoning of newly-formed divisions in the comparatively quiet sector opposite VIII Corps prior to their dispatch to more active fronts. The enemy is well aware of the tactical "ace" which he holds in the ROER River

dams. Our recent attempts to breach the dam walls by air bombardment, as yet unsuccessful, have served to emphasize our own concern with the flooding of the ROER Valley. The enemy has reacted by building up his forces on the routes of approach to the SCHWmmenauel and the URFTALSPERRE, the key dams in this system of barrages. Besides the divisions in the Sixth Panzer Army, the enemy has 2 Pz and 116 Pz Divs conditionally available for local counterattacks in the defense of the dams, in addition to at least two Volksgrensdier divisions which are available form the VIII Corps sector.

c. Reserves Available to C-in C West Sixth Panzer Army, as mentioned above, 2,5,6,7 and 8 Para Divs of First Para Army, two or three VG Divs from Germany, one or two Divs from Norway, and the possibility of one or two reconstituted PZ Divs from the East appear to be the present limit of reserves available to the C-in C West. During the month of November the enemy suffered losses amounting to roughly four divisions a week. He has been replacing these losses from reserves east of the RHINE at the rate of about one and one-half per week, with the divisions being made up by the saving of 5 or more divisions from Holland plus other reserves on hand west of the RHINE. There is reason to believe that he can continue to meet this heavy attrition for the next month or two by drawing next on divisions now enroute to Germany from Norway, in addition to the continuing flow of six divisions a month from Germany. When the Norweigan divisions are exhausted, he may still have other reserves made available by the shortening of his Italian front, and from the Balkans.

d. New Weapons. As stated above, V-1 may be expected to be employed near his focal point of counterattack. The major part of the aviation assembled in the west will undoubtedly be applied there; one or two secret weapons, such as the Karlgeraet 040, a giant self-propelled mortar capable of firing a 620mm shell weighing half a ton, may be used. This weapon was employed in the WARSAW uprising in August 1944. A battalion equipped with the 520 and 620 mm super heavy mortars may now be in the west, facing First U.S. Army. Possibly gas and other devises are to be forseen.

3. Flak. The reassignment of flak batteries in the First U.S. Army zone of action to a primary flak role appears to be taking place. This may indicate that the enemy feels that the front is stabilized in the First and Ninth Army sectors, and, therefore, he can again organize a balanced defense. To do this, the enemy now has about the same number of heavy guns as before the beginning of the attack. He is somewhat deficient in light flak. In general, the estimate that the enemy would not be able to replace losses of light flak after the Battle of France

appears to have been confirmed. Replacements of heavy flak for this assault area have come mainly from the RUHR, but it is estimated that there are still approximately a hundred heavy flak guns from destroyed or transplanted industries in the KOELN- BONN area which can be used as further replacements, or that half of these could be replaced in the industrial area defenses with available railway flak with little decrease in the efficiency. In general, light flak, and the great majority of heavy flak, now appears to be emplaced for primary AA missions. He can therefore be expected to use flak primarily for AA until a threat of a major breakthrough develops.

2. CONCLUSIONS.

a. Enemy Capabilities.

(1) The enemy is capable of continuing his defense of the line of the ROER north of DUEREN, his present front line west of the ROER covering the dams, and thence south along the West Wall.

(2) The enemy is capable of concentrated counterattack with air, armor, infantry and secret weapons at a selected focal point at a time of his own choosing.

(3) The enemy is capable of defending on the line of the ERFT and subsequently retiring behind the RHINE.

(4) The enemy is capable of collapse or surrender.

b. Discussion. Capability 2a(1) is current. The exercise of capability of 2a(2) is to be expected when our major ground forces have crossed the ROER River, and if the dams are not controlled by us, maximum use will be made by the enemy of flooding of the ROER in conjunction with his counterattack. Implementation of 2a(3) will occur most probably in the event his counterattacks are unsuccessful. He will hold on the ERFT in the nature of a delaying action to cover the retirement of his armies east of the RHINE. He may be expected to continue defending on the east of the RHINE with every means he has saved out of the forces now west of the RHINE, plus Volkssturm and other reserves. The implementation of capability 2a(4) is still a possibility. Any severe defeat inflicting shock on the enemy, either militarily or psychologically, may result in popular revolt, of these events produce collapse and surrender by groups. No surrender by the Nazi Party is to be expected.

c. Reasons. The enemy is apparently reconciled to the loss of ALSACE and to DEFENDING BEHIND THE UPPER RHINE. He is now fighting in the SAARLAUTERN area and along the position to retire behind the RHINE except where he has been forced to do so, and this occurred in a sector where

his West Wall is east of the RHINE. The continual building up of forces to the west of the RHINE points consistently to his staking all on the counteroffensive as stated incapability 2a (2).

B. A. DICKSON
Colonel, GSC
AC of S, G-2

APPENDIX A

This is a copy of the estimate which is on file at the Military History Institute.

The Ardennes had been chosen for the assault because it was one of the weakest-held sectors of the Allied line. Whilst it was relatively safe entrusting the secret of the operation to a carefully selected body of staff officers pledged to secrecy, the danger of the enemy opposite being alerted to what was happening rose considerably as preparations intensified and culminated in the movement of the mass of troops and supplies into assembly areas close to the front. At the slightest indication that something was afoot in the Eifel, the Allies would have followed this up and rapidly altered their dispositions accordingly. At every stage of the planning and preparation for 'Wacht am Rhein' therefore, right up to the last moment, the need to prevent Allied suspicions from becoming aroused was absolute.

The ruse behind the measures for preserving the secrecy of the operation relied on the belief being spread that the OKW expected the Allies to try to break through in the Cologne - Bonn region. In this way, all the various movements of troops and supplies would be given a misleading slant, as if they were being made in response to this threat. In the northern concentration area certain moves were to be carried out blatantly to reinforce this impression, but any intensification in road or rail traffic which hinted at a build-up in the Eifel was only to be undertaken under conditions of the utmost secrecy.

For any junior officer given to pondering on the rise in the number of map exercises — all based on night-time moves — and the mock attacks in winter conditions and hilly ground, the ruse

provided a not-unreasonable explanation. It happened also to coincide with the major effort the Allies were making north of the Ardennes in the Aachen - Düren region as part of their overall plan to gain the line of the Rhine and encircle the Ruhr.

'Befehl für Täuschung und Geheimhaltung' (Orders for Deception Plan and Maintenance of Secrecy), issued by Jodl on November 5 and sent to Westphal, Krebs, and Generalmajor Eckhard Christian, Chief of the OKL Operations Staff, explained the stratagem and set out how surprise was to be attained. The orders were stamped 'Die Geheimhaltungsbestimmungen sind nach Inhalt und Verteiler beachtet' (Maintenance of secrecy procedure to be observed in accordance with content and distribution):

Oberkommando der Wehrmacht
Nr. 28/44 g. K. Chfs. St. Wl St/Op. (II)

Führerhauptquartier
November 5, 1944
8 copies
1st copy

To
Ob. West. Chef Gen. St. = 1st copy
Gen. Lt. Westphal

with NA. f. H. Gr. B. Chef Gen. St. = 2nd copy
Gen. d. Inf. Krebs

OKL/Chef Lw. Fd. Stab. = 3rd copy
Gen. Major Christian

Re: Wacht am Rhein

Orders for Deception Plan and Maintenance of Secrecy

The Führer has ordered:
The basic principle of the deception plan is as follows:

The German High Command is expecting that a heavy enemy attack against the line Cologne - Bonn will still take place this year.

In order to strike at such a breakthrough on its southern and northern flanks, two strong counter-attacking groups will be assembled: one north-west of Cologne, the other in the Eifel. Accordingly, in carrying through the deception it will be necessary to conceal the massing of strength that will inevitably result in the Eifel while making out that there are more troops than are actually present in the area north-west of Cologne.

The following guidelines will therefore be followed:

1.) Assembly plan:

The Rheydt - Jülich - Cologne region will be included in the railway unloading area. In this area part of the unloading operations will be carried out during the daytime, in all other areas only at night.

On the southern wing of Heeresgruppe B the unloading areas will be extended as far as the southern bank of the Mosel.

Issued in November by the staff of Heeresgruppe B, this list gave the code-names chosen for the main panzer units assigned to the army group. However, these could have been deciphered by a clever counter-intelligence officer as each codename had a phonetic link with the genuine name. For example: 2 = zwei (Zweibrücken); 3 = drei (Drilling); the 1. SS-Panzer-Division, i.e. the Leibstandarte, was termed 'Leibach', and so on. (Bundesarchiv)

Orders for Deception and Secrecy

2. Pz. Div.		Zwitschervogel
9. Pz. Div.		Neunkirchen
Pz. Lehr-Div.		Lebensweg
3. Pz. Gren. Div.		Drilling
15. Pz. Gren. Div.		Fünfziger
116. Pz. Div.		Hundertmark
1. SS-Pz. Div.		Leibach
2. SS-Pz. Div.		Zweibrücken
9. SS-Pz. Div.		Neundorf
10. SS-Pz. Div.		Zentrifuge
12. SS-Pz. Div.		Zwickmühle
Fhr. Degl. Brig.		Gleitvogel
Fhr. Gren. Brig.		Granate
Stu. Gesch. Brig.	341	Stürmer 1
" " "	902	" 2
" " "	243	" 3
" " "	244	" 4
" " "	394	" 5
Fsch. Stu. Gesch. Brig. 11		" 6
Stu. Gesch. Art. Brig. 667		" 7
s. Pz. Abt. (Fkl.) 301		Semper 1
s. Pz. Abt. 506		" 6
Stu. Pz. Abt. 217		" 7
Pz. Kp. (Fkl.) 319		" 9
s. H. Pz. Jg. Abt. 653		Hubertus 1
" 682		" 2
" 683		" 3
" 657		" 7
" 668		" 8
" 519		" 9

SS-Obersturmbannführer S k o r z e n y und
SS-Hauptsturmführer Werner H u n k e

sinn in die Planungen des Ob.West für die Aachen-Schlacht im
festen eingewiesen worden.

Sie sind darüber beehrt und bestätigen dies durch
Unterschrift, dass

- 1) die Aachenschlacht im Festen des höchsten Geheimnisses
bedarf und jegliche Telefongespräche über sie verboten
sind;
- 2) dass über alle vorbereitungen usw. mit keinem anderen
Offizier oder sonstiger Person gesprochen werden darf,
- 3) dass alle schriftlichen oder mündlichen Unterlagen nicht
über die Registratur laufen dürfen,
- 4) dass auch ein fahrlässiger Verrat, wie z.B. fernmündl.
Unterhaltung über diese Planungen, die Todesstrafe nach
sich ziehen kann.

den 10.11.44.

Otto Skorzeny
44-Offizier.
Walter Hunke
44-Helf.

The statement signed by SS-Obersturmbannführer Otto Skorzeny and one of his
officers, SS-Hauptsturmführer Walter Hunke, pledging their secrecy.

2.) Troop Movements:

All troop movements must, in principle, be
only conducted at night as long as they are
directed towards the front. Approach
movements originating from the area north-
west of Cologne and directed towards the
actual 'Wacht am Rhein' assembly-points
must be concealed with particular care.

In the area thus being vacated north-west of
Cologne, the image of strong occupation and
troop movements must be preserved. Ob.West
will take steps to see that march-movements
over a wide area take place in the region
north-west of Cologne, once the assault troops
have been withdrawn.

3.) Command posts:

The inevitable accommodation of command
posts in the Eifel area, and particularly the
close concentration of four commands which
is difficult to conceal, must be carefully
camouflaged.

The HQ of Heeresgruppe B will therefore
remain at its present location for the time
being.

The HQ of 6. SS-Panzer-Armee will be
established north of the line Cologne - Jülich.
Well concealed advanced command positions
will ensure issue of orders and preparations in
the assembly area.

The display of command flags of any type,
from divisional upwards, is forbidden at all
command posts not already moved to the 7.
Armee area before November 10.

Particular care must be exercised regarding
terrain reconnaissance in the front line areas
by staff personnel, and especially by high-
ranking officers, panzer officers in black

uniforms and SS commanders. Generals and
officers of the General Staff who do not belong
to divisions or HQ already stationed in the
front line for a long time, must either mask or
conceal their conspicuous uniforms and in-
signia (overcoat facings, red trouser-stripes).

4.) Unit identification signs will only be
carried by troops which have entered the front
area as complete units before November 10.
All other troops arriving after the above date
will only exhibit their identification signs from
O-Tag onwards.

5.) The necessary preparations for the repair
of roads, diversions around narrow streets in
villages in the Eifel area, must be made as
inconspicuous as possible by being
scrupulously camouflaged. Conversely, such
preparations must be carried out in a very
visible manner in the area north-west of
Cologne.

6.) Should the evacuation of a part of the
local population become necessary as a result
of the heavy troop concentrations, this must
not be confined to the Eifel area.

7.) The injection of the attack units into the
front line and the consequent conspicuous
narrowing of the unit sectors must be carefully
concealed. In particular, operations with
reconnaissance and assault troops must only
be carried out by units whose presence there
has probably become known to the enemy
from November 10. It is also forbidden for
individual officers, NCOs and troops from the
second echelon divisions or HQs, to take part
in any reconnaissance actions.

With effect from November 10, all
reconnaissance activities must stop, so as to

prevent the element of surprise from being
endangered by the capture of prisoners by the
enemy.

Particular care must be taken not to place
soldiers whose loyalty is suspect (Volksliste
III) in advanced positions where there is a
danger of treachery through desertions before
the opening of the attack. With effect from
November 15, Ob.West will report to
OKW/WFSt the current number of soldiers
missing from the units in action in the front
line areas.

8.) Ob.West must ensure that with effect
from November 15 the artillery fire on the
Eifel front is kept at the same volume and type
as before, unless enemy activity makes it
necessary to increase the volume. The arrival
of new artillery units at the front must not
under any circumstances be made known to
the enemy before the beginning of the attack.

Instructions for the type of fire will be
issued with the orders for the attack.

9.) Camouflage supervision:

Special camouflage-supervision officers,
together with the necessary personnel, will be
assigned to each army of Heeresgruppe B.
They will be given appropriate powers to re-
route any daytime traffic if this can be seen
from the air or the ground, or to see that it
does not exceed previous levels. They must
take immediate and ruthless counter-action
against any incidents endangering the security
and the secrecy of the operation.

10.) Radio traffic, radio deception plans:

Ob.West will make sure that the radio
traffic pattern remains unchanged, even after
the repositioning of Heeresgruppe B. Units
not previously in the front line will maintain
basic radio silence.

With effect from November 20, it will be
indicated in a prudent and inconspicuous way
that an army of eight to ten divisions is located
in the area north-west of Cologne. Ob.West
will be responsible for carrying out the radio
deception operations.

11.) Misleading of enemy intelligence services:

Ob.West will report what possibilities of
misleading the enemy intelligence (in terms of
para. 1) are currently available.

The information proposed for deceptive
purposes will be submitted for issue by
Ob.West.

12.) This order must not be circulated outside
Heeresgruppe B. Participating headquarters
will receive only individual orders or extracts
therefrom.

[Signed] Jodl

Addressees:

Chef WFSt	= 4th copy
Stellv. Chef WFSt	= 5th copy
Op.(H)	= 6th copy
Op.(H/1a)	= 7th copy
Reserve	= 8th copy

Regarding the reference to potentially
unreliable elements not being put into
the front line during the period before
the attack, Volksliste III were men who
had been vested with German citizenship
for a probationary period; they were
liable to military service but could not
rise above the rank of private first class.
As a result of Hitler's request for a daily
report on the number of deserters from
November 15, only five were recorded in
the Ob.West War Diary during the first
twelve days of December. Four were
listed for December 15 — a 'Reichs-
deutscher' from 340. Volks-Grenadier-
Division reported as 'probably not a
deserter' and three 'probables' from
18. Volks-Grenadier-Division; also
mentioned was an American deserter to
246. Volks-Grenadier-Division!